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STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

At the 3774th meeting of the Security Council, held on 8 May 1997 in connection with the Council's consideration of the item entitled "The situation in Georgia", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council has considered the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation in Abkhazia, Georgia, of 25 April 1997 (S/1997/340). It has also taken note of the letter of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the Secretary-General of 1 April 1997 (S/1997/268) and of the letter of the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the President of the Security Council of 28 April 1997 (S/1997/339).

"The Security Council reiterates its full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

"The Security Council reaffirms its full support for a more active role for the United Nations, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement.

"The Security Council acknowledges the efforts in support of the peace process of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General of 25 April 1997.

"In this context, the Security Council fully supports the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report of 25 April 1997 to strengthen the involvement of the United Nations in the peacemaking process. It fully supports, in particular, the intention of the Secretary-General to convene a meeting with both sides to map out the areas where concrete political progress can be made. The Council encourages the Secretary-General to explore the idea of revitalizing the Coordinating Commission and establishing expert groups on questions of mutual interest.

"The Security Council welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to appoint a resident Special Representative, as a successor to his current Special Envoy for Georgia, and to strengthen the political element of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG).

"The Security Council further encourages the Secretary-General to take such steps as are necessary, in cooperation with the parties, in order to ensure a prompt and safe return of the refugees and displaced persons to their homes, with the assistance of all relevant international organizations. The Council takes note of the initiation of activities by the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia.

"The Security Council continues to stress that the primary responsibility for reinvigorating the peace process rests upon the parties themselves. It welcomes the continuation of direct dialogue between the parties. The Council calls upon them, in particular the Abkhaz side, to intensify the search for a peaceful solution by further expanding their contacts, and requests the Secretary-General to make available all appropriate support if so requested by the parties. The Council notes the appeal of the Secretary-General to both parties to pursue the current discussions on the implementation of the decisions of 28 March 1997 adopted by the Council of Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (S/1997/268, annexes I and II).

"The Security Council remains deeply concerned at the continued deterioration of the security conditions in the Gali region, including acts of violence by armed groups, indiscriminate laying of mines and armed robbery, and the resulting deterioration of the safety and security of the local populations, of the refugees and displaced persons returning to the region, and of the personnel of UNOMIG and the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS peacekeeping force). The Council condemns the acts of violence which have led to the loss of life of members of the CIS peacekeeping force. It welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to continue to make every effort to build upon the positive results recently achieved in order to improve the safety of the military observers and the operational effectiveness of UNOMIG.

"The Security Council reminds the parties of their obligation to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force, and, in particular, to prevent the laying of mines.

"The Security Council welcomes the good cooperation between UNOMIG and the CIS peacekeeping force and their efforts to promote stabilization of the situation in the zone of conflict.

"The Security Council also welcomes the continued efforts by the United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations to address the urgent needs of those suffering most from the consequences of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, in particular internally displaced persons, and encourages further contributions to that end. It also reiterates its encouragement to States to contribute to the voluntary fund in support of the implementation of the Agreement on a Cease-fire and Separation of

Forces (S/1994/583, annex I) and/or for humanitarian aspects, including demining, as specified by donors.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to continue to keep it closely informed of the situation."